

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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SUBJECT: SITUATION IN SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

REF: A) LISBON 3912; B) LUANDA 0513

1. SUMMARY. ACCORDING TO THE ANGOLAN MILITARY AUTHORITIES FARM WORKERS ON SAO TOME CALLED A POLITICAL STRIKE ON SEPTEMBER 5 AND 6 TO FORCE THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE MLSTP. VIOLENCE ERUPTED AND ONE PERSON WAS KILLED. FARM MANAGERS LOCKED OUT WORKERS, BUT THE MILITARY FORCED THEM TO OPEN THEIR GATES. THREE WHITE FARM MANAGERS ARE UNDER ARREST. THE ANGOLAN HIGH COMMANDA HAS SENT AN OFFICER TO SAO TOME TO INVESTIGATE. A MLSTP AFFILIATE ON SAO TOME REPORTS A DIFFERENT STORY. END SUMMARY.

2. SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE FALL UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE ANGOLAN HIGH COMMAND FOR ALL MILITARY MATTERS, ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNOR OF THE ISLANDS IS RESPONSIBLE IN CIVIL AFFAIRS TO LISBON. THE EVENTS OF THE PAST TWO WEEKS HAVE NOT YET BEEN SORTED OUT, BUT WE THOUGHT IT WORTHWHILE TO OBTAIN WHAT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE HERE AND
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REPORT IT TO THE DEPARTMENT. I GOT THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT

OF EVENTS ON SEPTEMBER 17 FROM THE INFORMATION OFFICER OF THE HIGH COMMAND, WHO HAD READ THE CABLES FROM THE MILITARY COMMANDER IN SAO TOME.

3. ON SEPTEMBER 5 FARM WORKERS IN SAO TOME CALLED A GENERAL STRIKE WITH THE EXPRESS AIM OF FORCING THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT TO NEGOTIATE THE ISLANDS' FUTURE WITH THE SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE LIBERATION MOVEMENT (MLSTP). THE STRIKE LEADERS ARE MEMBERS OF A GROUP KNOWN AS THE PRO-MLSTP CIVIC ASSOCIATION. ON SEPTEMBER 6 THE CHIEF OF POLICE CALLED THE MILITARY COMMAND TO REPORT THAT A LARGE MOB OF BLACKS WAS THREATENING VIOLENCE. MILITARY POLICE ARRIVED ON THE SCENE AND FIRED SHOTS INTO THE AIR. AT THE SAME TIME, IT APPEARS, AN UNIDENTIFIED WHITE CIVILIAN SHOT INTO THE CROWD, KILLING A BLACK. THE MOB BEGAN TO LOOT AND DESTROY WHITE-OWNED STORES. THEY WERE SOON BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL, HOWEVER, AND THERE WERE NO FUTHER DEATHS OR SERIOUS INJURIES.

4. SHORTLY AFTER THE MOB SCENE, POSSIBLY THE NEXT DAY, WHITE FARM MANAGERS LOCKED OUT THEIR WORKERS, BUT PAID THEM FULL WAGES. THE WORKERS APPEALED TO THE MILITARY TO FORCE OPEN THE GATES, ARGUING THAT CROPS WOULD SPOIL AND THE WORKING CLASS WOULD BE EVEN WORSE OFF THAN IS NOW THE CASE. THE MILITARY MADE THE ROUNDS OF THE FARMS AND EITHER CONVINCED OR FORCED THE MANAGERS TO ALLOW WORK TO BEGIN. THREE WHITE FARM MANAGERS WERE ARRESTED, PRESUMABLY FOR INSTIGATING THE LOCK OUT.

5. THE ANGOLAN MILITARY COULD MAKE HEAD NOR TAIL OUT OF ALL THE REPORTS AND DESPATCHED AN ARMY MAJOR TO THE SCENE ON SEPTEMBER 15 WITH ORDERS TO INVESTIGATE, GET THE FACTS AND REPORT BACK. HE HAS NO POWER TO TAKE CORRECTIVE OR COERCIVE MEASURES.

6. MILITARY AUTHORITIES HERE SAY THAT THE STRIKE ACCOMPLISHED ITS PURPOSE AND THE GOVERNOR HAS AGREED TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE MLSTP. LATE REPORTS FROM SAO TOME ALSO INDICATE THAT BLACKS ARE SATISFIED THAT THE MPS, ALSO BLACK, DID NOT FIRE INTO THE MOB. THE POPULACE IN GENERAL, I WAS TOLD, HAS TURNED TO THE ARMED FORCES AS ITS ONLY PROTECTION IN THE FACE OF WHITE OBDURATENESS.

7. IN A TELEGRAM FROM SAO TOME TO THE MAGAZINE NOTICIAS OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LUANDA DATED SEPTEMBER 11, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRO-MLSTP CIVIC ASSOCIATION GIVE A DIFFERENT VERSION OF WHAT HAPPENED.

8. ACCORDING TO THE TELEGRAM, PRINTED IN NOTICIAS OF SEPTEMBER 14, "POPULAR" GROUPS ENTERED SAO TOME STORES ON SEPTEMBER 5 TO PROTEST PRICE INCREASES OF BASIC FOODSTUFFS. AS THEY WERE TOSSING SUGAR, FLOUR AND ONIONS INTO THE STREETS, THE MILITARY POLICE ARRIVED AND TREATED THEM IN BRUTAL FASHION. THAT SAME DAY THE

"PEOPLE" DECLARED A GENERAL STRIKE. ON THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 6 TROOPS ENTERED THE HOME OF A WHITE TO SEARCH FOR WEAPONS. A CROWD OF 200 ONLOOKERS WAITED OUTSIDE THE HOUSE FOR THE RESULTS OF THE SEARCH. THE MILITARY POLICE ARRIVED AND SHOT INTO THE CROWD, KILLING ONE PERSON AND WOUNDING AN UNSTATED NUMBER OF OTHERS. WHITES FEIGNED PANIC AND LEFT THEIR FARMS AND VILLAS TO SEEK REFUGE AT THE MILITARY POLICE HEADQUARTERS. ON SEPTEMBER 7 TWO PLANE LOADS OF TROOPS ARRIVED ON THE ISLAND. "OPPORTUNISTS" TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE NOW ABANDONED FARMS TO LOOT THEM. THE PRO-MLSTP CIVIC ASSOCIATION ORGANIZED THE "PEOPLE" TO PREVENT THE SACKING OF THE FARMS. BY SEPTEMBER 9 THE SITUATION WAS ALMOST BACK TO NORMAL, ALTHOUGH THE STRIKE CONTINUED TO FORCE THE GOVERNMENT TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE MLSTP. ON SEPTEMBER 11 THE "PEOPLE" LIFTED THE STRIKE UNTIL SEPTEMBER 16, BY WHICH TIME THE GOVERNMENT SAID IT WOULD GIVE A REPORT ON THE OPENING OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE MLSTP. MEANWHILE, THE TELEGRAM CONCLUDES, FARMERS AND REACTIONARY FORCES HAVE LOCKED THE WORKERS OUT OF THE FARMS.

9. WE WILL REPORT FURTHER UPON THE RETURN OF THE MAJOR FROM SAO TOME. AT THIS POINT WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION TO BE ABLE TO SAY WITH ANY CERTAINTY WHAT HAPPENED, NOR DO WE KNOW WHAT THE CIVIL AUTHORITIES ON SAO TOME HAVE REPORTED TO LISBON.

10. IF WE CANNOT GET A CLEAR PICTURE OF THE SITUATION, I WILL SEND AN OFFICER TO SAO TOME AFTER THE OFFICER WHO IS NOW IN CABINDA LOOKING INTO LIBERATION GROUP ACTIVITIES THERE GETS BACK TO POST.
KILLORAN

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